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ABSTRACT

This pamphlet outlines various activities and decisions implemented by the Maryland State Reading Plan. "Maryland's Reading Groups" discusses the four groups formed to focus on the general field of reading and its improvement. "The State Reading Plan" looks at the seven goals of the plan, objectives adopted for helping students improve their reading skills, staff development, and volunteer utilization. "Student Improvement Program Activities" examines the functional reading programs, the early screening program, the functional literacy programs, the reading motivation programs, the special needs programs, the continuum of educational services plan, an instrument to evaluate reading programs, and the gifted readers program. "Staff Development" discusses special education inservice training, and volunteer and paraprofessional training. "Other Programs" outlines several other reading programs closely related and coordinated by the reading team but not specifically a part of the State Reading Plan, such as Right to Read, Reading Breaks, and Accountability Laws. And "The Future" presents programs and activities planned for the future. (WR)

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Reading In Maryland

In 1971, the Maryland State Board of Education established reading as one of the state's educational priorities. This decision was based upon the national emphasis on reading in the 70's and a statewide needs assessment report from the Maryland State Department of Education. To implement the Board's priority, the Maryland State Department of Education Executive Staff charged the Division of Instruction with the development and implementation of a comprehensive reading program for the state.

Simultaneously, the Division of Instruction was directed to list basic reading goals for 12-year-olds, 16-year-olds, and students graduating from high school in Maryland, and to develop a criterion-reference test which could be administered throughout the state and upon which basic instructional decisions could be made.

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Maryland's Reading Groups

In answer to these mandates, the Division of Instruction formed four groups, each uniquely qualified to concentrate its efforts on specific portions of the general field of reading and its improvement.

State Reading Task Force

In the fall of 1971, the Division of Instruction appointed a State Reading Task Force. Its 33 members, representing the business and college communities, parents, teachers, reading personnel, and a member from each division of the Maryland State Department of Education, were to meet annually to make recommendations to the Department for reading activities and programs within the state.

Collegiate Educators

A second group, consisting of key college professors of reading from throughout the state, was formed at a meeting of the State Teacher Training Institutes. They were brought together to help facilitate their communication and cooperative efforts and to make decisions and to implement plans for Maryland's reading priorities.

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Reading Liaison Group

The Reading Liaison Group formed another contingent of the state's reading professionals. Each local superintendent appointed a person responsible for liaison between that county and the Department of Education. These individuals are responsible for facilitating the implementation of the state reading plan in their local systems.

The Reading Team

The final group to be formed was a special Reading Team within the Division of Instruction. Six persons, brought to the task because of their professional expertise in reading, special education, English, foreign languages and the teaching of English as a foreign language, early childhood education, and other such areas, work together on the entire scope of reading problems and priorities within the state. Three are assigned full-time to the project while the remaining three have half-time responsibilities in reading activities.

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The State Reading Plan

The state's *Reading Plan for the 1970's* was written through the cooperative efforts of the Reading Task Force, teacher education leaders, the Reading Liaison Group, and the Reading Team. Initially they identified seven goals upon which all activities are to be based:

1. To define reading as a process of getting meaning not only from printed word but also from any form of print or nonprint materials;
2. To make available to each reader a wide variety of print and nonprint materials from which he or she may freely choose;
3. To enable each reader to learn to read print by a method of instruction which is consistent with his or her personal learning style;
4. To provide each individual with humanistic teachers who are students of the reading process and who are readers themselves;
5. To teach reading as an integral part of communicative process through observing, listening, speaking, and writing;
6. To teach reading for enjoyment, entertainment, and recreation as well as for the acquisition of knowledge and specific content areas; and
7. To base reading achievements on objectives, evaluative criteria developed from accepted research, theories of human learning, and motivation.

The State Reading Plan seeks to implement these goals by developing three general areas: student improvement, staff development, and volunteer utilization.

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Student Improvement

In 1971, the following objectives aimed at helping students improve their reading skills were adopted:

- To help all students in Maryland become functional readers (that is, readers who can cope with everyday reading experiences—following directions, locating references, gaining information, understanding forms, and attaining personal development);
- To increase adult literacy (that is, to train adults to read well enough to function in the occupation of their choice);
- To increase self-motivation for reading, (thereby, to allow students to select their own reading as a personal activity); and
- To strengthen reading services for severe reading problem cases (which are those students who have a problem because of some physical, psychological, social, or neurological problem).

In 1973, an additional objective was implemented: to provide early screening for all Maryland primary students in order to discover learning problems.

In 1974, another objective was implemented: to evaluate a school's reading program to determine whether or not it is both comprehensive and balanced. Such a program should be systematic, beginning with its pre-kindergarten curriculum and extending through its adult education experiences. Such a reading program should include diagnosis, evaluation of various materials, trained staff, specific goals, and measurable objectives.

In 1976, two new objectives will be added to the state's program:

- To increase program opportunities for gifted readers (that is, those who have mastered the basic skills of reading and need additional work in critical and crea-

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tive skills areas); and

- To initiate Project Forgotten Reader (for readers who are making limited daily progress in mastering reading skills but who could do much better with additional appropriate help.)

Staff Development

To implement the State Board of Education Resolution on reading, specific objectives were established for programs to train all elementary teachers and secondary level English and social studies teachers throughout Maryland. The resolution's purpose is to insure that these teachers will have specialized, professional training in teaching reading by 1980. This staff development program is designed to develop skills for teaching reading to all students, including those with special needs. Implemented through course offerings by colleges, three model reading inservice courses have been developed cooperatively by the Division of Instruction's Office of Curriculum Development, and the Division of Instructional Television.

Volunteer Utilization

In 1971, programs were initiated to train and utilize volunteers in the reading programs of local school systems throughout Maryland. The State Plan provides for the training of at least 10,000 volunteers by 1980. These volunteers will assist teachers in classroom activities, reinforce skills areas, provide opportunities for students to interact in a one-to-one relationship, and tutor on an individual basis.

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Student Improvement Program Activities

Since 1971 various activities have been undertaken to implement the State Reading Plan. In a number of instances, staff efforts have been focused on particular problems for which specific programs have been developed.

Functional Reading

Functional reading is one of the state's most innovative programs. It has received national recognition as one of the few programs in the United States that has tried to define the Right-to-Read concept of functional literacy. It includes all students in Maryland, from kindergarten through twelfth grade, as well as special education students.

The functional reading program is based on statewide goals and objectives which establish a minimal performance level for all students. Citizen groups helped clarify the goals and objectives which were established for the functional reading program. For example:

- All sixth graders in Maryland should be able to read road signs, telephone books, cash register slips, and directions on medicine bottles.
- All tenth grade students should be able to read first-aid directions, want-ads, hotel reservations, and application forms.
- All high school graduates should be able to use indices and read directions on voting machines, income tax forms, bank statements.

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In 1973, statewide testing of these objectives began with the use of a criterion-referenced test. This test contained the sample items listed in the objectives. Thus, both the state and each local school system can determine its strengths and weaknesses in providing functional reading skills. By using this data, instructional programs will be modified as necessary.

The results of the 1973 test showed that students in Maryland were competent in reading such things as: book indices, telephone directories, and soup can and voting machine directions. At the same time, a need was discovered to improve the teaching of reading of such things as: interpreting grocery ads, employment information, company rule books, and content textbooks.

To help the local school systems implement functional reading as a part of their balanced reading programs, specific guidelines were developed. They outline the characteristics of a functional reading program, illustrate assessment techniques, declare levels of reading competencies, and offer suggestions for implementation of the program.

During the 1973-74 school year, these guidelines were tested in pilot programs in 70 elementary, middle, and secondary schools throughout the state. Each cooperating school faculty volunteered to experiment with these techniques and activities suggested by the guidelines. These schools reported their successes and recommendations for change. The resulting data was studied and analyzed in a statewide workshop during the summer of 1974 to develop resource materials. Filmstrip presentations and an activities handbook for teachers were developed. These materials will be used throughout the state during the following school year to introduce functional reading to all Maryland educators.

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Early Identification

A second program of student improvement is the early screening activity for potential learning problems. Financed by state and federal funds, it evaluates the abilities of kindergarten and primary level students.

A multi-discipline task force worked two years to develop a school plan and assessment procedures to identify students with potential learning handicaps and to modify instructional programs for such cases according to their needs. They determined that the best initial screening device for these early age level students is teacher observation. Thus, the State Department of Education developed a teacher observation screening device which measures student abilities in six essential development areas: sensory/perception, affective/social, psychomotor, cognitive, self motivation, and language. The instrument was validated through use by more than 1200 teachers and specialists in 1000 kindergarten and first grade classrooms, including those for students with special educational needs. Now, every Maryland school student will be screened for learning problems through the use of this systematic teacher observation instrument.

In addition, a model school plan will be implemented in every Maryland school so that early identification and program changes are available to all students. The plan has three phases:

> In Phase I, screening of all students by using the expertise of the classroom teacher and drawing on information from the parents is undertaken. From the activities occurring in Phase I, a school team identifies the students who need Phase II.
>
> Phase II provides for approximately 15 per cent of the students who are expected to need individualized services. First, it provides a diagnostic evaluation by appropriate specialists who may be either school-or-

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system-based. Second, it requires that an individualized educational management plan be written and implemented by the school team and specialists.

In Phase III, comprehensive services are provided for those students who are identified from Phase II work or who need even more specialized help. Since the number of students is expected to be quite small and the help needed is quite specialized, the services probably will be accessible through interagency and community services, rather than a local education agency.

In compliance with the law (Section 98C, Article 77), school systems throughout the state will be required to implement these procedures beginning in January 1975. Prior to this date, the plan will be tested in seven school systems through pilot programs. Workshops were held during the summer of 1974 to train local school system personnel to use the guidelines and model plan.

Increase Literacy

A third program, designed to increase literacy, is funded from state and federal Adult Basic Education monies. The program is conducted by the Adult Continuing Education Section of the Division of Instruction. Adults who are more than 16 years old and out of school, including prison immates, are enrolled in basic reading courses. Reading centers for adults are spread throughout the state. Such centers in Baltimore City, Salisbury, Annapolis, and Cumberland offer adult programs at any achievement level—from grades 0 to 12. Other basic courses are available, as well, including testing and counseling services and high school credit courses.

Adult learning centers are also available in Maryland prisons. Approximately 1200 inmates are studying reading in the Maryland Penitentiary in Baltimore City and in the men's and women's sections at Jessup.

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This adult learning center concept is an innovation of the Maryland State Department of Education. Its successes have attracted national publicity and won an award for merit from the Regional Office of the United States Office of Education.

Self Motivation

A fourth program of student improvement is concerned with reading motivation. A state funded program, it is a cooperative effort of various divisions and the Department's Bureau of Educational Programs. Designed for students from pre-kindergarten through eighth grade, it will develop four series of programs for broadcast over the instructional television network.

The purpose of the series is to develop skills for two of the state-approved reading goals: training students to utilize a variety of materials, and helping students to select reading as a personal activity. Too often skills such as selecting appropriate materials, reading appreciation, and character and author identification are ignored in reading programs. For example, the pre-kindergarten/kindergarten series will help students by emphasizing that communication takes place through reading print and nonprint materials; that people possess talents which are unique; that the environment in which one lives affects one's life style; and that everyone faces social situations for which coping skills are developed.

Reading Problem Cases

A fifth student improvement program, developed by the Office of Special Education of the Division of Instruction,* is the Continuum of Educational Services effort for handicapped students, designed to treat mental retardation, learning and language disabilities, and speech, hearing, and

* The Office of Special Education was elevated to Division status by act of the Maryland State Board of Education in October 1974.

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emotional problems. This program is made up of seven ancillary services:

- consultant services
- diagnostic-prescriptive services
- itinerant services
- resource rooms
- self-contained classrooms
- non-public, home, and
- hospital day residential services

State and federal funds are being used to allow students from kindergarten through the sixth grade with special needs to continue in the mainstream of education while they receive specialized help. The goal of this project is to have continuum programs in operation in all elementary schools throughout Maryland by 1980.

Continuum of Educational Services Plan

Many students who have problems learning to read have special needs. A learning problem may cause additional trouble in many content areas. Thus, to provide a multi-discipline assessment and a program of instruction, the Office of Special Education developed the Continuum of Educational Services plan. The purpose of the continuum program is to provide instruction to all students with special needs by helping them remain in the mainstream of instructional services while receiving specialized aid.

The continuum concept was developed in 1969 and pioneered in Maryland in 1970-73. By 1980 each Maryland school will have incorporated the continuum concept into its operating procedures.

Students who have limited problems in reading but do not require continuum services are helped in several other ways. First, most school systems have specialized help available: either a reading specialist or a reading teacher. Since the

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main emphasis in these programs is prevention rather than remediation, reading personnel are teamed with classroom teachers most of the time.

Second, students needing specialized assistance work in small groups with reading personnel during each school day.

Balanced Reading

In response to principals' requests for a process to assess their schools' reading programs, an evaluative instrument was developed by select groups of reading professionals from schools throughout the state. During the 1973-74 school year, several schools tested the evaluative instrument which assesses such topics as a school's stated philosophy and goals, its program implementation, its staff competencies, and its instructional process.

Beginning in 1975, this instrument will be available for use throughout the state by school administrators, faculties, students, and community members. Produced totally from state funds, it will allow each Maryland school system to use a common instrument to evaluate its reading programs.

Gifted Students

Plans to implement this new program in 1976 are being formulated now. Students in grades four through eight who are nominated as outstanding readers by their faculty members will participate in special seminars and summer sessions at the Maryland Regional Center for the Arts. In small groups gifted readers will develop their reading speed as well as their critical and creative reading and thinking skills.

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Staff Development

The second major interest of the State Reading Plan is staff development for elementary, secondary, and special education teachers. One project of the Reading Team, funded with both state and local monies, provides inservice training for elementary teachers.

The Reading Team, with college professors and teachers from throughout the state, has developed model workshop outlines which stipulate basic teacher performance functions for earning workshop credit. During their training, teachers are taught to prescribe materials appropriate for an instructional reading level by analyzing scores from both formal and informal tests; to pick words which signal reading problems from a list of symptoms; to outline five ways to analyze a word, show examples of each and identify activities which will teach each way.

Since the summer of 1973, the Reading Team and the University of Maryland reading staff have trained approximately 200 teachers throughout Maryland to teach model workshops in their local systems. So far, 3000 elementary teachers have taken or are taking this training.

A second project designed for secondary teachers follows the same procedure as the inservice model for elementary teachers. This model builds such competencies as the ability to find the readability level of a passage, to give the assets and liabilities of using such a formula, and to define "content reading" and outline specific problems related to the content taught.

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Although the bylaw designates that only social studies and English teachers at the secondary level take courses in the teaching of reading, many other content teachers have enrolled to learn how to use the reading process in teaching their content specialty. To date, 2500 secondary school teachers have enrolled.

Additional models, for training teachers to work with severe problem readers and adult basic readers, are planned for implementation in 1975-76.

Special Education Inservice Training

Special education staff members, in cooperation with specialists from the Division of Instructional Television, have produced and aired a lecture series to train teachers who work with children in kindergarten through sixth grade who have special needs. This series seeks to train teachers to diagnose student needs and prescribe instruction programs; to modify classroom behaviors; to teach basic skills, such as reading, writing, and mathematics. Several graduate schools in the state offer graduate-level seminars in conjunction with this series. The series is available for national distribution and is now being used in six states.

Volunteers and Paraprofessionals

More than 7000 volunteers help in reading programs throughout the state. Each volunteer has received approximately 20 hours of preservice training which includes working with a teacher, instruction in professional credential standards, practice activities for reinforcing skills, and organizing a situation. The state has trained approximately 50 tutor trainers to conduct these volunteer training programs.

A volunteer handbook has been published which outlines the training program and profitable use of volunteers in Maryland. It's title is *Volunteers in Reading.*

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Other Programs

Several other reading programs are closely related and are coordinated by the Reading Team although they are not specifically a part of the State Reading Plan for the 1970's.

Right-to-Read Sites

The United States Office of Education has funded two Right-to-Read sites in the state. One program, funded in Baltimore City seeks to redirect the reading achievement of students through intense teacher training, program planning, and instructional modification. Baltimore was one of the ten largest cities in the United States to receive a grant to aid reading education in the urban setting.

The second site, in Dorchester County, was granted $8000 to extend an existing program which is being carefully monitored as an exemplary program because it uses the students' own language as the source learning word recognition and comprehension skills.

Reading Breaks

Believing that reading classes too often teach students only how to read but seldom allow students a chance to read, two schools in 1971 initiated daily reading breaks. During this time (approximately 30 minutes), instruction is stopped throughout each school and students, teachers, administrators, and buildjng staff read. Each reader selects his or her own subject matter. Motivational techniques are used periodically by both staff and students.

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The program results indicate both reading improvement in staff members and students, generally higher interest in reading, and more interaction between students and faculty about print and non-print materials.

Approximately 150 elementary and secondary schools in Maryland now have some type of daily reading break.

Accountability Laws

Accountability laws of Maryland give reading, writing, and arithmetic priority status in the state's educational programs. The basic goals of the state's reading activities take into account that (1) all students should be able to use a wide variety of print and non-print materials; (2) all students should develop a word recognition system; (3) all students should attain a minimum comprehension level; (4) all students should be able to read well enough to function in society; and (5) all students should be able to read as a personalized activity.

These five basic goals unite the efforts of reading in Maryland. Each local school system organizes its reading objectives to achieve these goals. Thus, each student throughout his or her school career will be taught to achieve these goals.

Although no one ever becomes a perfect reader, all readers are encouraged to achieve all five goals. Any reading program should be comprehensive enough to include these basic skills.

Just as the goals are comprehensive, each student is tested for achievement. A minimum mastery level of functional ability is required for all students; however, achievement is expected in all goals.

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The Future

Maryland's plans between now and 1980 will be determined by several factors. Present programs and budgets and future accomplishments and finances will determine the ultimate directions of all of these programs. However, additional major programs and activities are planned and will soon be implemented.

These include increased services for students with reading problems, especially teacher training and staff development in the rural and smaller counties in Maryland. Project Forgotten Reader is planned for students who are now reading well but could improve their skills. They are the average students who are not problems cases, who do not fit into any federal programs, and who are not gifted.

In addition, college-bound students in high schools need reading courses designed specifically for their future educational needs. A fourth project will seek to make available home libraries for rural children who cannot get to public libraries but who must become familiar with books before they go to school. Its dual focus would not only provide books for children who need them but also train parents in their proper and most effective uses.

Maryland's Reading Plan outlines the major goals between now and 1980. Its planning has been a cooperative effort of citizenry and professional educators. Its implementation is the responsibility of the Reading Team and local liaison group members.

When this plan is fully implemented, students in Maryland will have a chance to achieve a minimal reading standard in

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order to cope with their basic reading needs in society; achieve widely because each student is unique and uses the reading process for different purposes; receive the most individualized instruction possible in public education; and be instructed by teachers with recently acquired competencies to teach reading.